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12/04/17

Good morning. I had an incredible experience last week. The nonprofit **Patriot Foundation**, which supports families of deceased or wounded soldiers, sponsored a daylong tour of Fort Bragg for representatives of several North Carolina family foundations. The immediate upshot is today's "Fort Bragg Daily Digest edition." The more permanent result is a newfound respect for military servants. Times are tense with an evil North Korean dictator and a volatile U.S. president. But meeting some of Fort Bragg's most powerful leaders, veteran snipers, several Special Forces soldiers, some new recruits — and **Chuck Deleot's** Patriot team — made it crystal clear: our nation's security is in very good hands.

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## Fort Bragg may add 2,500 soldiers

Lt. General **Stephen Townsend**, perhaps the most famous soldier at Fort Bragg because of his battlefield **leadership** in Iraq and Syria, sees growth ahead. The three-star general commands the 18<sup>th</sup> Airborne Corps, made up of 90,000 soldiers across the world.

Fort Bragg is likely to add 2,500 or more soldiers over the next few years as the Army expands. The 163,000-acre base now employs about 51,000 people and serves as the nation's "911 service." When trouble strikes, Bragg gets the call.

The nearby Pope Field, which was an Air Force Base until 2005 and is now managed by the Army, may also grow. Townsend called downscaling the base "a political mistake ... I'm an advocate for bringing them back. In my view, it is only a matter of time."

To better understand Fort Bragg's impact on Fayetteville and North Carolina, read this recent *Business North Carolina* [story](#).

## Elite mission

Another briefing came from Kurt Sonntag, commanding general of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School. In other words, he's in charge of training Special Forces, whose work is described in this excellent *Time* [story](#).

He said about 22% who start the 18-month training program complete it. About half of Special Forces' soldiers are recruited from outside the service because of their skills and mental, physical and emotional attributes.

Only a fifth of all Americans eligible for military service meet qualification standards, Sonntag says. The rest are obese, inadequately educated, have criminal records or lack

other skills.

But those who make the cut are world class. Sonntag said he'd rather be treated for a serious medical problem by a Special Forces colleague than most conventional doctors.

## Trust

The most startling demonstration was watching about 10 Special Forces soldiers enter a small, boarded-up house occupied by a mythical terrorist. They fired hundreds of rounds of live, deafening ammunition in very tight quarters, then emerged without injury. I asked several guys if they feared someone would miss? No, they said, the demonstration reflected thousands of hours training to build skills and trust. That is true teamwork.

## Howard Jones tribute

Last week I noted the impressive life story of the late Howard Jones, who ran a Wilson nonprofit that provided job training and emergency food relief to thousands of people. Jones, who died recently, was named the Wilson Chamber of Commerce's 2016 **Distinguished Citizen of the Year**. Unfortunately, I misstated his last name, and I regret the error.

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## AROUND THE STATE

### **Tim Belk goes back to the land**

*(Charlotte Observer)*

Former Belk CEO Tim Belk has a new project since selling his family's namesake department store chain to New York private equity firm Sycamore Partners in December 2015. He has started an organic farm.

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### **Fayetteville defense contractor sentenced to five years for defrauding the government**

*(N.C. Business News Wire)*

North Carolina defense contractor Philip A. Mearing was sentenced by a federal judge to five years in prison for defrauding the federal government of more than \$15 million. Mearing, 48, sent fraudulent payments from his company, Global Services Corp., to two straw companies run by co-conspirator Kenneth Bricker.

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### **Retailers want online lottery sales slowed**

*(Raleigh News & Observer)*

The N.C. Retail Merchants Association wants legislators to slow down a proposal to offer instant online lottery games. The association worries online sales could hurt retailers that sell tickets.

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### **Winston-Salem startup takes on opioid crisis with connected pill bottle**

*(Triad Business Journal)*

Winston-Salem startup Pillevē wants to use the Internet of Things to help combat opioid addiction. The company is making a "smart" pill bottle using real-time data and technology to monitor prescription use for symptoms of abnormal behavior.

*(Raleigh News & Observer)*

Scientists at RTI International and Duke University are working a high-tech commode that can convert human waste into water, smoke and dust. The scientists are working under working with an \$18 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on the toilet, which could reduce water contamination around the world. RTI has also begun testing a version for military use.

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### **Burt's Bees, Seventh Generation ex-execs launch investment firm**

*(Triangle Business Journal)*

A group of former executives of Burt's Bees and Seventh Generation has launched an investment company to back companies with social good as part of their mission. Instead of having a fund, the company, One Better Ventures, sets up special purpose vehicles for each investment and allows limited partners to opt in on a case by case basis. John Replogle, a former leader of Burt's Bees and Seventh Generation; former Burt's Bees president Jim Geickie, and former Burt's Bees Chairman Peter Graham are among the partners in One Better Ventures.

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### **Duke Energy eyes bigger role for Atlantic Coast Pipeline**

*(Charlotte Business Journal)*

Duke Energy Corp. president of natural gas operations president Frank Yoho told the S.C. Public Service Commission last week that he sees "great opportunities" for extending the Atlantic Coast Pipeline into South Carolina. But first, the pipeline has to be built from West Virginia to North Carolina.

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### **Local banking in Charlotte dwindle**

*(Charlotte Observer)*

Charlotte, one of the nation's largest financial centers, faces a dwindling number of banks. Following recent mergers, Bank of America and NewDominion Bank will soon be the only banks with headquarters in the city. That's down from eight in 2007.

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